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SOME JAPANIZED CHINESE PROVERBS.

JAPANESE proverbs may be divided into two classes, according as they are of native origin or borrowed from China. In citing these sayings, foreigners fail to perceive the distinction, and I have never seen any reference made in European books to this difference of derivation. The following list contains a number of proverbs originally Chinese, and brought into Japan in a measure by literary influences, but so generally used and understood that they have become nationalized. The English translation is nearly literal. Of the proverbs, a number are also given in Chinese characters.

1. Better return home and make a net than stand on the bank and regard the fishes with longing eyes.

A saying in common use, and employed as a motto for screens hanging in parlors or studios. For example, the proverb was written over his room-door by a Japanese student in Harvard University with the English explanation : "Go home and make your net."

2. Draw a *kō* (large wild bird) imperfectly, it still resembles a duck ; draw a tiger imperfectly, it only looks like a dog.

If you choose for your model a man of sound common-sense, you may come somewhere near the original : but if you undertake to copy an eccentric genius, you will only make yourself ridiculous.

3. When the arrow is on the string it must go.

While your heart is set on anything, and you engage in it with enthusiasm, you cannot draw back.

4. One who rides a tiger must continue to go fast.

The signification is identical with the preceding.

5. The swallow does not understand the intention of the stork.

The man of low motives cannot fathom the purpose of a noble nature.

6. When two partners have one mind, its sharpness cuts through metal.

A common saying, which to a Japanese mind might suggest the famous story of the Soga brothers, who anciently determined to avenge the death of their father, and were successful through their union.

7. To exhibit a sheep's head and sell a dog's flesh.

Generally applied to deception, as for example of an ignorant man who pretends to be a scholar, and sounds his *hora* (conch-shell; in English, blows his own trumpet).

8. A good bird selects the tree for its nest.

Applied in feudal times especially to the selection of *shujin* (masters), and still used in similar sense, as for example with reference to a student who is to choose the best school in which to pursue his studies.

9. Try to put out a fire with fuel in hand.

As for example the conduct of a talkative person who endeavors to make up a quarrel, which he only succeeds in embittering.

10. Like scratching one's calf through boots.

The relief is imperfect, inasmuch as the spot affected cannot be directly reached. Might be employed of reading a famous work in a foreign translation.

11. Good swimmers die in water and good riders in shooting.

Over-confidence is the cause of misfortune.

12. A year's opportunities depend on the spring, a day's on the dawn.

It is the initial steps that determine the success of the enterprise, or of the life.

13. Spilled water cannot be gathered up again ; a broken mirror cannot again reflect.

Like the English adage in respect to spilled milk ; the proverb is especially applied to the case of divorce ; when persons are separated in this manner, it is rare in Japan for them once more to come together.

14. While keeping a tiger from the front door, a wolf enters by the back door.

A saying well known, as used by Shu-shun-sui in describing the situation of the hero Kusunoki. This warrior had just succeeded in crushing a powerful enemy of the emperor, and in restoring the latter to his throne, when another chief revolted. Perceiving that the situation was desperate, and that there was no hope of his return in safety, Kusunoki departed to the battle, sending back his son, whom he charged to be faithful to the emperor ; and in obedience to this

command, six successive generations of his descendants perished in the imperial cause. The prince of Mito afterwards set up a memorial stone to Kusunoki; and the epitaph, containing the proverb here cited, was written by the naturalized Chinese scholar Shu-shun-sui.

15. To conceal a needle in one's smile.

16. The moth which dashes into the flame burns itself.

17. The mantis catches the cicada, ignorant that the sparrow is after it.

18. Man's life is like a candle in the wind.

The proverb is often associated with Epicurean ideas, like those of Omar Khayyám.

19. Year after year flowers look the same,
Year after year men are different.

Two lines of a famous Chinese poem, entitled "On Behalf of a White-haired Man." The verse is supposed to be recited by such an aged person, who compares the permanence of nature with the vicissitudes of the human element in the scene.

20. A generation is like a white horse passing a crevice (*geki*, space between screens).

The reference is to one who sits in an apartment, and through an orifice catches a glimpse of the steed that flashes past.

21. A tiger leaves behind him his skin, a man his reputation.

It is desirable to accomplish something which will secure for the actor permanent fame. Confucius says: "The true man hates (the thought) that his name will not be on the lips." This notion degenerated; thus Kwan-on, one of the Chinese heroes, said: "If I cannot waft sweetness for a hundred generations, I will diffuse a stench for a myriad generations."

22. One's good deeds are known only inside the gate, one's bad deeds a thousand miles away.

Men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues
We write in water.

King Henry VIII.

23. At the first cup man drinks wine, at the second cup wine drinks wine, at the third cup wine drinks man.

Rice wine is freely drunk, and considered as a necessary part of any social ceremony, but excess is disliked. A well-known writer of two centuries ago said : "Wine is a precious broom to sweep away melancholy." Another said : "Wine is madding water."

This proverb has been rendered into English verse :—

At the punchbowl's brink
Let the thirsty think
 What the people say in Japan :
First the man takes a drink,
Then the drink takes a drink,
 Then the drink takes the man.

24. Faithful words displease the ear, and beneficial drugs are bitter in the mouth.

25. It is easier to fill up a valley than to satisfy the mind of man.

26. To paint feet upon snakes.

This would be superfluous, since snakes can move rapidly without feet. The idea is equivalent to that contained in the English line :—

To gild refined gold, to paint the lily.

27. The heron and oyster quarrel, and the fisherman gets the benefit.

The heron tries to devour the oyster, who on his part closes his shell on the heron's beak, so that both become the prey of the fisher.

28. Calamity and fortune alternate like the spiral strands of a rope.

29. To foul the spring and expect the stream to be pure.

30. Rotten fish generate grubs.

The presence of the worms is a proof of the corruption of the substance ; a tree is known by its fruits.

31. Lords, generals, and premiers spring not out of particular seed.

An adage continually in the mouth of ambitious youth, as of a young man who leaves his native village to seek success in the world.

32. Without going you can get nowhere ; without doing you can do nothing.

33. If you do not enter a tiger's den you cannot get his cubs.

34. The man is equal to any task who can subsist on cabbage-stalks.

35. To draw a pumpkin after another's pattern.
Used of a person deficient in originality; the task of drawing a *kolo*, or pumpkin, is so easy that imitation is not to be expected.

36. It is easier to know how to do than to do it.

37. When you shoot (the enemy), first shoot his horse; when you capture the rebel, capture the chief.
Aim at the essence of the thing; the foeman whose horse is killed is helpless.

38. A thousand soldiers are easier to get than one general.

39. Don't pull up (*i. e.*, put on) your shoe in a melon field; don't adjust your hat under a plum-tree.
Avoid even the suspicion of evil; if you were to stoop in order to put on your boots, an observer at a distance might suppose you were picking up melons; if you raised your hand to arrange your hat, he might think you were plucking the fruit above your head.

40. Ripe melons drop without plucking.
Any strong impulse will lead to action, as a really bad man will manifest his character, without any effort on your part to expose him; or a serious student will do his best without external impulse.

41. One dog barks at something, and the rest bark at nothing.

42. Gold is tested by fire, man by gold.

43. You need not use a great blade (literally, a beef-knife) to carve a fowl.

44. Four in the morning, three in the evening.
One of the Chinese classics has a story, to which this saying refers. A man owned a monkey, whom he fed with nuts, giving him seven every day. When he gave the monkey only three in the morning, reserving four till the evening, the monkey became angry; but when he changed the arrangement, and bestowed four in the morning, the monkey was pleased. The adage is frequently applied

to legislation which is intended to give immediate satisfaction to an ignorant populace.

45. One who chases deer does not see the mountain.

A person who is absorbed in his present pursuit becomes oblivious of anything else. There is a story that a man passing along the street and looking into a shop saw many men counting a pile of gold ; he rushed into the shop and attempted to carry off part of the treasure ; when arrested and carried before the magistrate, who demanded how he could be so desperate as to attempt a robbery in broad daylight, he replied : "I saw nothing else."

46. Water obeys the shape of the vessel, square or round.

Especially employed in regard to the case of friendship, in order to urge the importance of having good friends, as character is determined by surroundings.

47. *Sendon* is fragrant, even when it has only two leaves.

The sweet plant *sendon* smells sweetly, even when in a state of embryo ; the proverb might be used of a hero, who would be courageous even in his infancy.

48. Playing on the harp with its *kotoji* (tuning-piece) glued in.

The wooden tuner should be changed in position according to the condition of the weather and circumstances of the day. When a stupid man has succeeded in accomplishing anything, he expects to achieve fortune by the use of the same means ; he is like a harp-player, who when he has found the right place for the *kotoji* would glue it on, in the idea that it was the only proper arrangement.

49. Like watching a stump to catch a rabbit.

The story is, that once a rabbit, running at full speed, struck his head against a stump and killed himself. A farmer found the dead animal, and henceforth spent his time watching the stump, expecting to get another rabbit. The application is similar to the preceding.

Michitaro Hisa.

Note. — The proverbs printed in Chinese characters, p. 138, correspond to those of the English text as follows. (Read the columns from top to bottom, and reckon from right to left.) First section, numbers 1, 2 (two columns), 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; second section, numbers 11 (two columns), 12 (two columns), 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; third section, number 19 (two columns), 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

1 臨淵羨魚不如退而結網

11 善游者死水善騎者死

19 年々歲々花相似歲々

2 畫鵠不成尚鷄鳶画虎

射

21 年々人不同

3 不成終類狗
4 箭在弦上不得不發

12 一年之計在於春一日之

20 人生如白駒過隙

5 燕雀安知鴻鵠志

13 覆水不可收破鏡難再照

22 好事不出門惡傳千里

6 二人同志其利斷金

14 前門拒虎後門進狼

23 一盃人飲酒二盃酒飲酒

7 懸羊頭賣狗肉

15 笑中藏針

24 三盃酒飲人

8 良禽擇木而棲

16 飛蛾撲燈自燒其身

25 忠言逆耳良藥苦口

9 抱薪救火

17 蟬螂捕蟬不知黃雀伺其後

26 糜壑易填人慾難滿

10 隅鞅搔痒

18 人生如風前燭

27 畫蛇添足

然筆字下